

*This was the final project for the Ethnomusicology 20C (Musical Cultures of the World: Asia) course, taught by Professor Katherine In-Young Lee in Fall 2020 at UCLA. Students worked in groups to research and conduct an oral history with one of seven musicians who also served as a guest lecturer for the course. Each of the narrators are highly esteemed musicians with long professional careers in music performance. They also serve as important liaisons between their home countries in East, South, and Southeast Asia and the United States.*

### **Profile of Rahul Neuman**

This interview explores the musical life of Rahul Neuman, co-director of the Indian Music Ensemble at the University of California, Los Angeles. Neuman shares a myriad of the experiences in his musical journey, professional training, and performances as an Indian classical sitarist. He begins by explaining how deeply invested his family was with Indian classical music—his parents both studied Indian classical music and his grandparents were great aficionados. He recounts how this music was always being played or heard in his household, describing his atmosphere at home as filled with visiting musicians playing and discussing music. After years of lessons, he briefly lost interest, only to regain his love and appreciation for the sitar in college. He narrates his personal experiences studying under Ustad Shujaat Khan both at the University of Washington and later in India. For Neuman, these are “rich and interesting experience(s) that [he’ll] cherish forever.” Professor Neuman proceeds to speak more deeply about Imdad khani gharana, his school of playing, and its lyrical style. After comprehensively explaining specific sitar techniques involved in mastering this gharana, Professor Neuman shares his unique experience performing for MTV’s Icon show in 2002 with Aerosmith. He describes how the organizers slated him to open the performance with a raga after witnessing his improvisations in an earlier rehearsal. Despite the challenges leading up to this fusion performance, Neuman remembers it as an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Professor Neuman continues by explaining his relationship with Abhiman Kaushal, the other co-director of the Indian Music Ensemble at UCLA. The directors work independently when they teach their students, but they work collaboratively on performances and concerts, especially the annual spring concert of the ensemble. Neuman expresses that both his pedagogy and his performance improve as a result of working closely through this collaborative work. As he teaches many students who do not have a background in Indian classical music, Neuman describes the pedagogical and musical interventions that occur when addressing both Western and Indian musical traditions in his teaching. For example, students with backgrounds in guitar will have a tendency to use incorrect fingering techniques on the sitar, or students with backgrounds in jazz have a tendency to improvise outside of the parameters of improvisation in Indian classical ragas. Students might also compare ragas to certain scales or modes that they are familiar with in Indian classical music. Neuman believes that these differences help students approach their sitar studies with nuance despite their pedagogical challenges, and that students

are ultimately prepared to give excellent renditions of ragas after a period of study. He concludes the interview by sharing an impactful experience with his guru, Ustad Shujaat Khan, in which Neuman was impacted by the individualized attention and support that he received from his teacher. Throughout this interview, Rahul Neuman captures the breadth and depth of his musical life; from his studies to his performances to his teaching, he shares the multiplicity of his experiences as a performer and educator of the sitar.

### **Oral History Interview Transcript: Rahul Neuman**

**Herman Luis Chavez:** Thank you for joining us. I am Herman Luis Chavez, joined by Samantha Cabral and Professor Rahul Neuman. It is November 20th, 2020 at 3:08pm in Los Angeles, California.

**Samantha Cabral:** First, could you start us off by giving an introduction of who you are? And then, could you discuss more into your musical background, what sort of music you grew up listening to, the music your parents had, etc. In other words, would you mind sharing your musical journey that led you to where you are today?

**Rahul Neuman:** Yes, absolutely. My name is Rahul Neuman. I teach Indian classical music on the sitar. I started learning the sitar at about age 11. My parents, and their families, have always been very much involved in music. My father and father's father played professional violin—Western classical. He grew up with a lot of exposure to Western classical music. When my father went to college he pursued Ethnomusicology with a focus in Indian classical music. During his fieldwork research in India, he met my mom, who was one of his assistants in doing the fieldwork in India. My mom herself comes from a family that is also steeped heavily in Indian classical music.

My mom's sister, Sharmistha Sen is a professional sitarist. My mom's parents—grandparents on my mom's side—were great aficionados of Indian classical music. Their household in old Delhi, a neighborhood called Daryaganj, was very much a place where many of the great musicians of the 60's and 70's would go to their household and just hang out—either drink tea, talk about music or whatever. Quite often those discussions lead to impromptu concerts, whether it be by Mushtaq Ali Khan, who is a sitarist, or Radhika Mohan Maitra, who was a sarod player. That was the milieu my mom and her family had growing up. That extended to the environment I grew up in with my brother and parents in the states. We would have musicians over, playing or discussing music, or if not, then recordings being blasted around our house of Indian classical or Western classical music. So, it was very much part of my surroundings all the time growing up.

I got into it just because my brother was learning, he had learned more properly since he was five taking lessons and what not, and as younger brothers often do in wanting to follow in their older brother's footsteps, I saw him and would take the sitar and pretend I was playing. My parents eventually saw that and got me to start taking lessons. I first started learning from a couple people. My mom was one of my first teachers giving me the basics of scales and techniques. Then my aunt who was a professional sitarist was also a very important influence and teacher. I also learned from Jeff Lewis, who was a disciple of Z.M. Dagar, and is an amazing North Indian dhrupad player. He played the bin—similar to sitar, but also very different. I started learning in a couple different styles—that was from age 10 to 16. Then, around that time in high school, I started taking lessons and practicing became more of a hassle and painful excursion. I would do anything I could to get around practicing, including running my finger along the string to pretend like I had practiced. I'd rather be out on the playground playing with my friends. So, finally my parents stopped pushing me and forcing me to take lessons.

It was not until the early 90's for whatever reason I started to really understand and appreciate Indian classical music. So, I dove back into it heavily. Not coincidentally, it was at this same time that Ustad Shujaat Khan was a visiting artist at the University of Washington where I was an undergraduate. So, I started taking lessons from him, got into it quite a bit. He was a visiting artist for a year and then went back to Delhi. After that year I knew I wanted to continue, so I took 3 or 4 quarters off, and went to India to learn intensively under my now-guru Ustad Shujaat Khan. However, I also learned from my aunt and other influences as well when I was in Delhi. Those were really my formative years in learning Indian classical music, and music in general.

Just as a side note, that is not to say I was only interested in Indian classical music. I was always interested in many different forms. In grade school I was really interested in Judas Priest and Iron Maiden—I was a little kid headbanger. I liked pop and fusion music as well. My brother and I were really lucky to have my parents in the sense that they always had a good array of different types of music in the background. We had a good exposure to a variety of music.

**HLC:** Thank you so much for sharing that with us, Professor Neuman. It sounds like there really was a lot of dynamic influences that allowed you to approach your studies in sitar.

Beginning in 1992, you studied under Ustad Shujaat Khan and learned from Imdad khani gharana, the particular style of playing under that musical family. What was your experience of the guru-shishya tradition and this particular gharana? How is your gharana important, and how do you continue it in your own teaching?

**RN:** Yes, that is a good question, and expands quite a bit. My own experience studying from Ustad Shujaat Khan was really interesting. Like I said, it started when he was Visiting Artist at the University of Washington. He was gracious enough to give all the students who took his

class there some really good talim—or instruction. It was something that I almost in retrospect took for granted because I think back to the amount of knowledge that he imparted from his gharana to all the students; it was just a wealth of knowledge and wealth of beautiful music. For that and many other reasons I got more deeply involved and that is why I took the time off immediately after his departure and followed him to New Delhi.

I remember when I got to his house—and this is just a little example to show the bridge between Western culture and Indian culture as it pertains to Indian classical music—typically you do pranam, which is a way of showing respect to elders and teachers. You respectfully bow down and touch their feet and do a symbolic gesture just showing your respect. In the States I had known this, but I was always uncomfortable because we were always in a Western setting, and I wasn't sure if every time I entered the classroom I should do pranam. I asked him, and he said, “Nope, don't even worry about it. We are in a really different environment, so you don't need to do that.” Then when I went to India I asked him the same question, wanting to do it and show my respect without perhaps crossing any lines. He was a little bit more casual perhaps than other teachers might be; he said “when we are seeing each other every day you don't necessarily need to do that—whatever you feel comfortable with. But now that we are in India if we go to a concert or are around other musicians and elders then absolutely you should do pranam, just to show that you are following those proper gestures of respect.” This was a long way of introducing that transition from learning from a great Ustad while in the West as opposed to learning from him while in India. It became a more formalized guru-shishya relationship in that number one, I studied a lot more. I would stay at my grandparents' place at the northern part of the city, take my sitar, pack it into a little rickshaw, drive all the way across town at 8:30 in the morning through all the crazy traffic in Delhi, then arrive at his place and spend the entire morning there. It was just an amazing experience getting lessons, getting talim. Sometimes he would just say, “get your sitar and start practicing.” Then maybe an hour later he would come in and reprimand me for playing a particular scale wrong or something that was not played clearly—focusing his guidance a lot more in this relationship. We did that six days a week. I would stay at his house for the entire day and after lunch get a little more talim. Then I would take the rickshaw with the sitar and go over to my aunt's, have tea, get another lesson for a couple hours then come back to my grandparents' place in Daryaganj. Come nine or ten o'clock, I'd sit down with them before dinner and they'd ask all sort of questions about what I've learned.

The entire day, it was not only about learning the music, sitting down and learning “okay, you got this lesson, this is the chalan, we are going to learn from this raga,” but there was also just a lot of discussion about the music. My aunt would ask me what Shujaat Khan Sahib had taught me and then my grandparents would ask me what I learned from both of them, and how was it different—they were different styles. It was a really rich and interesting experience that I'll cherish forever.

That is also where I learned or got a little bit better understanding of that really special relationship between teacher and student. Instead of money being exchanged for teaching me this composition or giving me some instruction, it is more in what we do—what we call seva karna, doing services in exchange for this imparting of knowledge and guidance. He would have me and other students do very random and kind of fun tasks, like taking a rickshaw to this address on the other side of town and asking them for a CD that this person had borrowed from Khan Sahib a couple months back, or helping setting up some performance of his later on. A lot of it entailed accompanying him before, after and during his performances. I helped carry his sitar, and deal with everyone at the music venue to make sure everything went smoothly.

Along the way, a lot of the knowledge that was imparted and learning of the tradition happened in the form of stories. He would tell of his current and past experiences, learning from his father and all the other musicians and family friends that surrounded his upbringing. We would imbibe all those different experiences that he would discuss with us. He is not only an amazing musician but a great, great storyteller. This experience of completely being consumed in this world that he created with his words; he is just a wonderful storyteller and would convey this feeling of what it was like learning from his fathers and teachers as well.

**HLC:** It was wonderful to hear about your experiences worth Ustad Shujaat Khan. I would love to hear a little bit about the experience of the imdad khani gharana that you learned from Ustad Sujaat Khan and how you continue that tradition with your students today.

**RN:** Imdad khani gharana is a specific stylistic school of North Indian classical music. There are a lot of different characteristics about it that set it apart from other gharanas. One of the focal points of this gharana is something called gayaki ang, which is a style of performing on the sitar but mimicking the voice—so, you have a very lyrical, vocal style of playing on the sitar. It's a very beautiful and also extremely difficult way of playing. I think all gharanas and all stylistic schools, the sitar itself and Indian classical music is a very challenging and very difficult form of music and instrument to play; but, I think in this particular gharana it is quite a challenge, the techniques employed by both right and left hand, but particularly the left hand. Remember that we play on this instrument that has these curved frets, that allows us to pull from one note to the next, up to four, five, or sometimes six notes, if you can take that much pain! That flexibility of pulling several different notes from one fret allows for a means to mimic some of the embellishments and some of the elements you might hear a vocalist employ. Those techniques require a lot of dedication and repetition. If you are just doing a minor movement requires a lot of repetition in order to master that very difficult technique.

It was also interesting to learn these different styles side by side. As I mentioned, when I was taking these trips to India I would learn from Ustad Shujaat Khan for part of the time and then I also learned compositions, phrases, and ragas from my aunt. She learned from a different

gharana which had a very different sound to it. Part of the experience was learning how to play in this beautiful style but also realizing how much rigor was required in the practice of these phrases in order to be able to get it correct and express yourself correctly without sounding completely off tune, because these are such difficult techniques. It got this training. Especially with Ustad Shujaat Khan Sahib, no matter where you are, in order to learn from someone like him you have to be really dedicated, even if he didn't tell you directly. From your first lesson he'll give you a finger splicing exercise that is extremely difficult to do. As a result, he probably had a lot of attrition with students, but it just shows he is happy to impart that knowledge and those stylistic elements as long as the student had that level of commitment to really practice and try to get those techniques down.

At UCLA, everything I teach students now are different compositions, stylistic elements, phrases, exercises that I learned from my gurus. That is something that I try to impart in class. When you have a student that has no exposure to Indian classical music, which is such a huge world and has so much to it, one of the messages I try to convey is that this is one particular style or gharana through which we are learning Indian classical music. A student sticks through the quarter and gets more familiar with the music and what they learn, then I try to introduce other elements and of course expose them to other musicians who play in different styles so they can start to see some of those differences, and different sound you can create even while playing the same raga.

**SC:** You have performed at a variety of venues, in Delhi, India, Southern California, Chicago, including the University of Chicago, their NPR Station, Old Town School of Folk, etc. I was wondering if you could tell us more about your performance for MTV's Aerosmith Icon show. How did you get that gig? Did you enjoy it? What was that experience like and what do you think about rock and Indian musical fusions?

**RN:** Sure, there are quite a variety of venues that I've performed in that were all very different experiences. The MTV Icon performance was unique; I haven't had something quite like that. Abhiman Kaushal, who is the tabla director here at UCLA, was kind enough to reach out to me and asked me if I wanted to participate in that. It was a great opportunity that he gave me back in 2000 or 2001. Basically it was the full MTV rock and roll experience, or as close as you can get as an Indian classical musician, or sitarist, or tabla player. We performed a classic Aerosmith song called "Dream On" with a rock-pop band called *Train*. Still popular today, I believe, but very popular at that time. They were doing a rendition of that song and they wanted to add an Indian element to the song itself so they reached out to Abhiman, and Abhiman contacted me. It was a good experience. I was living in Seattle at the time, flew down to LA, and we had one or two rehearsals with the band. There was originally a vocalist as well. It was a great experience; there was a lot of challenges, which is to be expected when you are bringing some classical Indian musician into the fray of a rock band where neither side is that familiar with the other

side's style of music, or type of music. I believe whatever kind of project the lead singer of the band wanted to do with the lead singer of the Indian group wasn't quite working out the way they envisioned it. That didn't gel, so I actually got a little bit lucky, because while we were practicing, I was playing some different movements of Raag bhairavi, which can fit quite well, actually, with parts of "Dream On." So, they said "whatever he's doing, we hear that and it sounds pretty good, so why don't you open the piece with some of that?"—which, I was just playing some alap movements, which is the introductory movement of a raga—"play that, and it'll open the piece and lead into the song." That's what we did. The actual recording, a live recording, was the other interesting thing about it. We walked in as if we were a rock band rocking out—walking out, not rocking out, I guess we were doing both—rocking out on the stage and we had this live audience screaming at the top of their lungs. If you know anything about Indian classical music, that isn't quite the venue that you play for. It's very much an acoustic instrument; you need a little bit of silence to be able to hear yourself, let alone let others hear you, but that's the way it was. We started playing and we had a little portion opening on our own. If you listen to the recording, you can hear just barely a little bit of the sitar sounds coming out, but mostly what you hear is the audience that was screaming and yelling. It would be nice to think it was for us, but we had this actual rock star band behind us getting ready to sing a beautiful rendition of "Dream On." That was our experience. It was a lot of fun, being backstage, waiting along with the other musicians. These are all well-known musicians; Janet Jackson was performing, there were several other musicians who were well-known at the time. It was fun to be in the same room and in the company of so many other stars and talented musicians.

**HLC:** Thank you for sharing that experience. You mentioned that Professor Abhiman Kaushal, who is the other director of the Indian Music Ensemble—yourselves as co-directors here of the ensemble at UCLA—were performing together. You perform on sitar and he performs on tabla. The two of you have also performed together in the past, at performances such as a 2016 performance at the Getty Center which was of the "East and West of Dunhuang: Music Carried by the Wind" concert. We would like to hear a little bit about what it's like to collaborate with Professor Kaushal and how your ensemble performances either inform or impact your teaching in any way.

**RN:** I have been in many ways blessed and lucky to have been surrounded by so many amazing musicians and teachers. I've talked about my teachers: my aunt, Ustad Shujaat Khan, Jeff Lewis. It's really the same with Professor Kaushal. He is a wonderful person and a wonderful musician, and to be able to collaborate together at UCLA has really been a great experience and a wonderful learning experience for myself. I consider him not only a good friend, a master musician, and a fantastic, amazing tabla player, but also by virtue of being in the presence and hearing them perform, you really learn quite a bit, not only the way they perform the music, but how he holds himself, how he interacts with everyone from students to audience members to other musicians. I've learned a lot in my years here before UCLA and while at UCLA, just from

being around Abhiman Kaushal, the ultimate professional, and an amazing musician. These collaborations—the way these classes work—are that we of course have separate classes. I teach sitar students and he separately teaches tabla students. But, at the end of every year, we get to do an ensemble performance: a spring concert. Leading up to that, usually a few months leading up to that, we start merging the two groups, and this is when Professor Kaushal and I get to sit together and guide the group into how to play together, sitar and tabla students together. That's really quite a unique treat, not only for myself, but for the students—both the sitar and the tabla students. Leading up to then, they have spent many months learning how to play this beautiful instrument and this beautiful music, and then it culminates in preparation for the concert, where they learn a little more hands-on how the two instruments play together. The ensemble performances during the spring concert as well as several others throughout the year—those definitely inform the way that I teach at UCLA, in the same manner that my experience with all of the wonderful students at UCLA informs the way I teach.

Over years, as with anything, you learn how to do a better job, at your playing yourself, but you also learn how to teach better. Through the years I've now gained a little bit of experience and have now seen what elements of the music and of how I teach something to students, what works better, what doesn't work as well. Also it's that constant communication with the students. The way they react to something that I teach them, or if there is someone who has a background in music—a student who has a background in music—or a student who doesn't have a background in music, you see both of those reactions. What I teach them or what I show them by example, how that actually leaves an impression, how that impresses upon them, and how that affects how they intake it and play it back. It's the way that the techniques that I use or the methods that I use to teach have changed quite a bit over the years at UCLA. Sometimes it has to do with music students—some of the very talented music students—that I've had at UCLA who bring their own background in music. I've had a lot of students who play guitar and are quite good at guitar, or they've learned Western classical or they've learned jazz. I'll teach them a little about raga theory, and a gat or a composition, and a little about improvising, and that'll spark a little connection of commonality between those two musics. We have a discussion about how this aspect of Indian music is similar to what they've learned in jazz from a standpoint of improvisation, what's similar and what is different. That definitely informs the teaching process for me in the short run in the year, and also over the years. Every year it constantly changes and evolves and adapts to how I teach the students in class.

**HLC:** Thank you so much for sharing that. You actually touched on the next thing I wanted to ask you, which was about some of your pedagogy and what it might be like to work with those students who have a background in Western music history. It sounds like you're doing some really interesting things with some of the comparative work that might be able to happen between the different aspects of musical theory that are going on with this North Indian tradition as compared to what students are approaching their coursework with. I'm wondering if you can

share any particular pedagogical or teaching moments that you've had where you're either engaging or challenging what students are bringing to the table and how that ends up informing the work that they do and that they learn in your classes.

**RN:** That's been one of the fun and interesting experiences that I've had. Quite often, as I mentioned, a student who perhaps has a background in Western classical music or has played jazz, whether it be flamenco or rock music, quite often there's a process by which there's a translation where "I'm learning this new raag, khamaj or yaman." First we start with the notes of the scale, and then maybe add in a few phrases and maybe a composition. After a while, some of the students who are more learned in Western classical will say "this sounds like this mode in Western classical" or "this technique sounds like this technique that I do on the guitar." Those are a lot of fun to compare and contrast, and use those bridges as a starting point in learning how to play the sitar and Indian classical music. It also presents us challenges, as quite often I'll have students that will continue to play with—and I'm exaggerating a little bit—play the sitar even after a few quarters of learning with very much a guitar style to it, whether it be how they actually hold or how they actually do the fingering. For example, in this particular gharana, with our left hand when we press on the frets, we only use the first two fingers: the pointer finger and the middle finger. Other gharanas use more than that, but only use the first two fingers. You'll have a guitarist who is more accustomed to using all four fingers, so you'll see them play on the sitar with four fingers. There's habits that you'll have to break and also be resigned to leave behind.

I've had some really talented students that have spent a few years learning and they actually get to a point where they can actually give a nice rendition of a raga on the sitar themselves, give a nice performance. I've heard a couple perform where they sound really quite nice. They get the correct sounds, they play the composition that they've learned correctly, and they get into the portions when they're doing some development, some improvising on their own around the taan work, which are these shorter or longer runs. Even that sounds quite good, and you can tell they have a better grasp of tala: getting back to the rhythm cycle at the right spot. As they get more and more relaxed and do some of their own riffing, I've heard students who are doing their own improvising where it sounds more like jazz on the sitar. It has a particular sway or a swing or a feel to it that sounds like you're playing jazz on the sitar. Same thing with Western classical—some of that exercises, they'll approach it and have that spark of familiarity, and they'll dive into it head-on. Which is good, just that sometimes it has too much of a feel that strays away from how it should sound in Indian classical music. There's always this nice balance between bringing what you have learned, or the type of music you grew up learning or at least hearing, and using that as a bridge to understanding Indian classical music. You're always making that translation, learning: "I'm trying to understand this new music form that I've never heard or played before by looking at it through a lens of a music form that I am familiar with," which has its benefits but then also has its drawbacks. I often talk about that. It's fun to discuss, but then also we should be

willing to let that go and follow the new technique, listen to recordings of Indian classical music, and try to emulate that sound rather than play jazz on the sitar or guitar on the sitar.

That's always a fun experience and sometimes it requires a little bit of extra redundant reminders. "Don't use that extra finger when you're playing on the sitar," or "when you develop your own taans, you want to try and develop the raga in the gat section, the composition section in this particular manner," "there's a lot of freedom, there's a lot of improvisation, but that doesn't mean you can take the notes of the scale itself and play whatever you want." Not to get too much into raga theory, but while it is a music that mostly involves improvisation, there is a particular structure that must be followed and rules that must be followed that really bring out the essence of the raga itself. You can follow these rules of ascending or descending, or incorporate these specific catchphrases, and then you've got the raag. As in with any music, just really listening and understanding the raga itself, and other musicians play the raga, and then playing it back to get that feel. This is what I constantly encourage my students, or oral students to do, is to continue to listen to the greats, to the recordings and live concerts of Indian classical musicians in order to internalize that sound.

Were you asking about fusion music in particular or just asking about pedagogy?

**HLC:** I was curious about pedagogy in particular.

**RN:** Let me know if there's something I didn't address in that.

**SC:** That was great, that was awesome, hearing about all of those student-teaching relationships and experiences. As a closing question, could you explain one of your most memorable experiences throughout your musical career?

**RN:** This is a tough one because I have quite a few. I think for any musician or anyone who likes music, this would be a hard one to answer, only because it's like "what's your favorite movie of all time?" or "what's your favorite piece of music of all time?" It's impossible to answer that question without listing off hundreds. Here's the first of one hundred—just kidding. When you mentioned that question, there is one experience that comes to mind. Maybe we can couch it as an illustration of this guru-shishya relationship, and also the power of getting some, however small, nod of acceptance in a particular group. Before I go into that, I will say some of the most powerful experiences I've had are actually being at concerts, live concerts. One of the first concerts I attended of Ustad Vilayat Khan performing in Seattle was really one of those experiences, just mesmerizing, you're transported to a whole other world. I've had that same experience with recordings where well be—as I've mentioned earlier on—in the living room with my family and well put on a recording of Raag yaman that we've heard hundred of times already, and all of the sudden you're just brought into this hypnotic spell of the music itself. Not just

listening to it and enjoying it, but also critically looking at all the different nuances that the musician, the artist, is employing and how they're exploring the raga and the different feelings that they are uncovering. It's just amazing to be able to listen to a piece so many times and then hear it again, even after you've heard it hundreds of times, and hear something new come out of it. That's been one of those powerful experiences, I'm always amazed at how impressive that is.

One of my personal experiences that left an impression: when I first moved to L.A., there was a house concert that was set up with my teacher, Ustad Shujaat Khan. He was asked to have several of his students give short performances at one of his friend's houses. There were four or five of us who went on and did short thirty-minute concerts in front of lots of the houseguests, your typical house concert. Kind of a nice venue, more intimate, audiences there, they're reacting to everything you do. The scary part about it is that Khan Sahib was, not only would he be listening, but he said that he would sit with each of the students afterwards and listen to the recording and give live step-by-step running commentary on the entire performance, which is incredibly generous, but also very frightening to have someone at that level—your guru—critique you as you're playing. I did the performance, and it was definitely riddled with mistakes, lots of things I wanted to do and I failed at doing that. But there were parts, a couple parts where I was like, "okay, I pulled that off and didn't make too much of a fool of myself." The experience itself afterwards: we sat a couple of days later, we had the recordings, we sat down having some tea, and he said "put on the recording." It was my turn, hearing him go through as I was playing and just give his ongoing narration of me performing was touching. A really nice thing for him to do. There was one point where he gave—he's not necessarily one to give out compliments very freely, all the time—and, there was one point where I played a particular phrase, which was something that I learned from him, and he said, "That was nice." Just a simple compliment, but the power that that had over me, I was like "I don't care if he was just being nice, I'm going to hold onto it, lock it away as a treasure for the rest of my life." I think about that all the time. It definitely was a powerful, encouraging moment in my musical life. I've heard similar stories in retrospect where Khan Sahib or my aunt is talking about giving a performance or giving feedback and quite often veiled compliments—don't get me wrong, most of it is critique, "you went from this note to that note, and you spent too much time on that note, you don't wanna develop that as much," lots of critique that's subject to "what were you doing there," lots of that—but also, the important of having that affirmation, that support coming from your guru, is a very important part of that relationship.

**HLC:** Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with us, Professor Neuman. We will be finished with this interview here. On behalf of Sam and myself, thank you very much.

**RN:** My pleasure.